

What's a Proletarian?

If we are going to have a "dictatorship of the proletariat" we might consider the qualifications of the fellow who is destined to rule hard on an economic decline to give him a definite character reference, for a dictator's duties being passed down to posterity. If we look to the occupations and backgrounds of the dictators of Socialists for a common denominator we are lost in a maze of contradictions; among them we find the "lucky hand" of labor and the steady wisdom of the intellectual, the generous young lady "on the make" and the frustrated old maid, the plain worker and his boss, the down-and-out and the millionaire. If these constitute a class, what makes them so? Maybe the common denominator is a doctrine, or a dogma. In that case, we must label this dictatorship *dogma* as a member of a cult, or at best of a school of thought. He belongs because he believes.

Karl Marx, who first gave the proletarian top billing, comes near to a definition when he refers to him as a wage-slave, with nothing but his labor-power to sell, whose wages merely suffice to propping and reproduce a bare existence; and who sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. From a scientist something more specific could be demanded. For instance, what is "bare existence"? Is it the condition of a scullie or of a mechanic who sports a jalopy? To join up with this group of rulers-to-be must one be an indigent share-cropper or an income-tax-paying labor leader? However, though Marx and his followers are a little vague on the matter, they do give us a clue to the kind of dictator we are to have by referring to him as a wage-slave. He is a member of that select group who live only on wages. To gain admission into that elite group one's wages must be low enough to keep the next meal in a constant state of uncertainty. When this elite is large enough and mad enough they will kick over the traces. That's the revolution.

If you happen to belong at the appointed hour it will be your "historic destiny" to "seize the state power and transform the means of production in the first instance into state property." So says Friedrich Engels, main contemporary disciple of Karl Marx. In doing so you will be putting an end to the state "as a state." But, remember, you will not be doing this of your own free will, for free is non-existent, a fiction of bourgeois morality. Social institutions are not shaped by the conscious action of men, but produced fatalistically by historic forces over which man has no say; sort of supernaturally, although Socialism would chew such a religious thought. Therefore, if in achieving dictatorship you commit a little mayhem, or even murder, you can hardly be held accountable. History has moral standards of its own. You do as she tells you.

While socialists shy away from the detailed workings of this patched-together dictatorship, the promise of an abundance-for-all is implied. It will not be like any dictatorships we have known of, in which a small group of men live by the wine-and-roses formula at the expense of those dictated over. The proletarian will not dictate over anybody; he will dictate *for* all. Since he has always lived by the sweat of his brow he will have no inclination to live by the sweat of somebody else's. He will live the poverty-bred honesty, his long training in humility, his enormous in common suffering will be for release of the power which history has thrust upon him. That enlightenment is not in the proletarian's

nature. Besides, the abolition of private property will automatically remove the possibility of, as well as the temptation for, exploitation. The only mission of this dictatorship of the downtrodden is to lift everybody up.

But how? We have a right to ask this candidate for dictatorship for at least an outline of his plan. Karl Marx insisted that there are no economic principles which operate under all circumstances; that is, there is no science of economics. He maintained that the production and distribution of wealth are systems which emerge from the prevailing "mode of production." Thus, slavery and feudalism had, and capitalism has, distinct

thing in the field of wealth from which all wages must come? For, dictatorship is nothing but a concentration of political power; if, as Socialists assume, such concentration is in the hands of the proletariat can come up with an abundance of bread, ham, automobiles and fur coats, it is fair to inquire how political power in anybody's hands can bring forth even a toothpick. That is, can political power produce anything?

When we look into political power we can see how it is simply the imposition of one human will upon another; the purpose is to bring about behavior that would not otherwise occur, or to prevent behavior that would otherwise occur. The dominating will must have physical force behind it. When the policeman tells

employed to direct wages from workers to non-workers, and when we look into the history of political power we see that it has always been engaged in such direction.

Socialists don't ask for any title potential of political power, but assume that when it is vested in the proletariat it will not be so used. Says Marx, in the *Communist Manifesto*, "Political power, property we called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another." And then, by a peculiarly socialist hop-skip-and-jump, he tells you how the new ruling class, the assumed proletariat, having centralized all power in its hands by means of force, will proceed to use it "to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible." Furthermore, having "wiped away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms generally, (it) will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class." And then "we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

It appears, therefore, that the proletarian is one who, having been reduced by involuntary poverty to a proper degree of humility, will be so changed in nature as to be free of the common inclination to get something for nothing, will use political power only for the general good. He will be exempt from the curse of graft; he will be cleansed of the sin of ambition; he will be rid of the lust for power. Indeed, he will be the re-angelized man, cleansed of the curse of Original Sin. And his class, the proletariat, will be the "chosen people," the real *horrenowich* who will deliver all of us from economic bondage.

If you can believe that you can believe Socialism.

It's Up to You

Individualism being something of an anachronism these days, the number of readers to whom analysis can have any appeal is necessarily limited. But that number is surely larger than its present circulation.

To find all the members of this "lost tribe"—lost in the wilderness of collectivism—would require a circulation campaign of proportions. Funds for such a campaign are lacking.

Therefore, I am forced to appeal to you for help. There are six persons in your acquaintance who might find this paper interesting. Why not subscribe for them?

Send in these six names with Five Dollars. Each will receive a gift card with your name. Thus your Christmas list will be augmented at little cost—and you will help analysis. I'm depending on you.

Frank Chodorov.

economic formulas, fixed by the ruling class in each case, and there are no natural laws,—such as wages, rent, interest,—applicable to all modes at all times. If that is so, it is incumbent upon the proletarian boss-to-be to tell us about the economics of the millennium. But on that point Socialism is singularly silent. Its proponents become irritated with you if you insist on knowing how the abundance of strawberries-and-cream will come into being under the dictatorship, and by what system it will guarantee each of us a generous bowl. They usually brush you off with something like "the ways of heaven must not be questioned."

SINCE, therefore, Socialism refuses to disclose its economic principles, (if it has any), we are forced to examine its promise in the light of such principles as we are acquainted with. We ask whether wages,—which under any system and in all times means strawberries-and-cream to the worker,—will be more plentiful under the dictatorship, what will make them so and how the worker will come by them. Karl Marx talked a lot about wages; let us, as he did not, definitely define the term so that we can put some pertinent questions about it to the proletarian dictator, before he becomes one.

Wages are that part of production which the worker receives. The essential element in this definition is the phrase, "part of production." The part may not be large, it may not be equitable, but it must be a segment of what is produced. Since there is no way of extracting something from nothing, even if all of production went to the worker that would be the top-limit of wages. That being so, the first question we must put to the man with the historic mission is, how can a dictatorship increase production?

Undertaking this question in the more basic one: can political power, as matter in which budget and sum-

me to "move along" I do so, even if I do not wish to, simply because I prefer not to be clubbed or incarcerated. So, then, our inquiry into the promise of the proletarian dictatorship comes to this proposition: how can the policeman's physical power to impose his will on mine add to the total of satisfactions by which men live?

This brings us to the elements or factors which enter into production. And we find that all things that are made are made by the application of human exertion to raw materials. No thing that caters to human desires can come into existence in any other way. That is, labor and land are the only factors of production. You can add capital as a third factor, if you wish, but upon examination you find that capital is itself a product of land and labor, not an original category; it is something made not for immediate consumption but to aid in further production. Anyhow, where does political coercion enter into this process? It cannot improve the skill or industry of the worker, it cannot add to the productivity of natural resources, it cannot invent a single labor-saving device. It has no office in the field of production. Therefore, there is no way for the policeman to use the power in his club to increase the total of wealth from which all wages come.

Nevertheless, the belief persists that the share of wealth which goes to labor may be increased by political power, not through an increase of the general production but through a more equitable distribution of that which has been produced. The belief is akin to the faith of children in a Santa Claus or of adults in a bold and charitable Robin Hood. Political power can, in proportion to its magnitude, do what it will with the people and the production of a country. It can take from John and give to Jim; and it can take from both and give to those in whom the power is vested. Yes, political power can be

Social vs. Political Power

A TEACHER at the Hyde Park High School, Boston, achieved the quality of a "value" to the students; because they derived a compensation from her personality she was popular. When, therefore, the authorities decided to deprive them of her companionship they felt that something of real worth was being taken from them. This deprivation they resented. Three hundred of them demonstrated their resentment by way of breaking the law; they stayed away from classes, carried banners, made speeches, "struck."

If this were a private school, one at which education is bought and paid for, like medical service, the authorities would have taken note of the marketplace value represented by that teacher; the students would have gotten what they wanted, what their parents paid for. In this instance, however, the school is a political institution. Such service as it renders is not dictated by the demands of the marketplace but by the whims of those in whom power is vested. The cherished teacher must go. Even though, as the newspapers reported, the parents were in accord with the wishes of the children, the will of political authority (aided and abetted, as usual, by organized religion) asserted its dominance by the simple expedient of threatening court action against the parents, coercion never fails on reason for support.

The show put on by the children was a demonstration of social power. Opposing them was the weight of sovereignty. In the nature of things the children wanted the backing of their parents; but at the point of last this support was denied them. Political power had won. The abandonment of the children was final. He effect on the strength of their characters, in addition to their teacher they had some of their self-esteem, which went into their fight for a "value."